

WASHINGTON POST
AND TIMES HERALD

MAR 27 1961

Fulbright on Cuba . . .

'Re-Evaluation' Must Wait

By Dan Kurzman

SEN. J. William Fulbright's appeal for a "candid re-evaluation" of this country's "hard" policy toward Cuba is not likely to have any effect whatsoever on this policy for the time being.



Kurzman

Some U.S. officials hint, however, that the Senator's views could plant the seeds of flexibility in policy-making in the future whenever conditions permit less rigidity.

"Flexibility" is considered out of the question, in any event, before a newly elected President assumes office early next year and takes stock of the need and possibility of policy modifications. For any attempt by the Johnson Administration to soften the Cuban policy before the election could seriously eat into the President's popularity.

After the election, the question of policy change would be largely up to the Fidel Castro regime itself. The United States, it appears, might be willing to soften its stand on Cuba if two conditions were met:

1. The withdrawal of all remaining Soviet troops and "technicians," who number less than 5000 now.
2. A halt to all subversive activities in the hemisphere.

SECRETARY of State Dean Rusk implied as much when he said at a recent news conference that Cuba's "military connection" with the Soviet Union and its interference in the affairs of other hemispheric governments were the two "fundamental nonnegotiable points" between the United States and Cuba.

And since there are indications that Moscow may remove all Soviet military personnel from Cuba before long, these two points could soon be reduced to one—subversion.

The Johnson Administration's view, in effect, represents a backdown from the stiffer policy often enunciated by President Kennedy—at least until the last several months of his regime—that held as "unnegotiable" the very existence of a Communist state in the hemisphere, certainly one with ties, even if not of the military variety, to the Soviet Union.

In other words, Sen. Fulbright's suggestion is not incompatible with the apparent Johnson view that, not Cuban communism as such, but Cuban activities outside Cuba, render an easing of U.S.-Cuban relations impossible, and need only be stopped to stimulate new U.S. thinking on the Cuban problem.

THE PRINCIPAL divergence in opinion seems to hinge on an evaluation of the danger posed by Cuban subversion. Fulbright said that Cuba did not represent an "intolerable danger so long as the nations of this hemisphere are prepared to meet their obligations of collective defense under the Rio treaty."

Other U.S. sources say, however, that there is little evidence that the nations of this hemisphere are, in fact, prepared to meet these obligations. And they maintain that there is even less evidence that Castro has any intention of giving up his efforts to subvert other Latin nations.

Furthermore, U. S. officials say, Fulbright's charge that the U. S.-imposed economic blockade of Cuba has failed is invalid. Success or failure cannot be measured by what little trade there is, they argue, but only by the amount that has been cut off.

Every dollar of trade lost to Cuba, it is pointed out, means either greater pressure on Cuba or on the Soviet Union, which has to compensate for such loss.

But this argument must be weighed against the Fulbright view that, by treating Castro like a "Napoleonic menace," the United States is permitting him "to poison our politics at home and to divert us from more important tasks in the hemisphere."

STATINTL